

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 819
By Coleman

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of John Sam Ridley, Sr.,
longtime Mayor of Smyrna.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of the honorable John Sam Ridley, Sr.; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ridley was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, for forty years, he served with acumen and alacrity as Mayor of Smyrna, in which position he earned the respect of his fellow government officials and constituents alike for the exemplary quality of his service; and

WHEREAS, Sam and his twin brother, Knox Ridley, were born in Smyrna on June 23, 1919; Sam graduated from Smyrna High School, where he and Knox played both offense and defense at a weight of no more than 108 pounds each; and

WHEREAS, he then attended Cumberland University in Lebanon, where he continued to display remarkable athletic prowess while earning three letters in basketball, four letters in baseball, one letter in boxing, and two letters in football; a born leader, he served the football team as captain; and

WHEREAS, at the outbreak of World War II, Sam Ridley wished to employ his natural leadership abilities for his nation and the free world by serving as an officer; because he stood only five feet three inches in height, this determined patriot had to secure a waiver from the Army headquarters in Washington to attend Officer Candidate School; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ridley became a tank commander in legendary General George Patton's Eighth Army Division, serving in Italy and France; entering the service in 1941 as a Private, he progressed all the way to the rank of Major in 1945 before receiving his discharge in 1946; and

WHEREAS, he returned to Rutherford County as one of the Volunteer State's most decorated veterans, with a Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart that he earned while fending off Hitler's last great offensive at the Battle of the Bulge, the Belgian Order of Leopold II, the Belgian Croix de Guerre, the French Croix de Guerre with Palm Fleur Royal, a Presidential Unit Citation, a Good Conduct Ribbon, and five Campaign Stars; and

WHEREAS, in 1947, Sam Ridley ran for and was elected Mayor of his native Smyrna, in which position he would continue to serve his friends and neighbors for all or parts of five decades; during his tenure, Smyrna grew at an incredible rate under its mayor's able guidance, and the remarkable quality of Mayor Ridley's leadership was acknowledged in 1963 when he was selected as Outstanding Mayor of the Year and in 1970 when *The Rutherford Courier* chose him as its Man of the Year; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Ridley also served in the House of Representatives of the Tennessee General Assembly representing Rutherford County during the 1951-52 Session; however, Smyrna was his primary, and he never spared any effort in promoting its growth and prosperity; and

WHEREAS, the great accomplishments of his term as mayor include building a new water system, sewage system, library, city hall, public hospital, numerous playgrounds, and streets, while, incredibly, never increasing the city tax rate; and

WHEREAS, throughout his life, Sam Ridley was committed to promoting the welfare of his community and his fellow citizens; he was involved in numerous civic organizations, including the American Legion, VFW, D.A.V., Elks Club, Smyrna Rotary Club, Loyal Order of Moose, Masons, and Shriners; and

WHEREAS, known throughout the region for his leadership ability, he served as President of the Tennessee Municipal League, Smyrna Hospital, the Mid-Cumberland Council of Government, and the Tennessee Automotive Association; Vice President of the Tennessee Highway Users Association; a Trustee of Belmont College and Middle Tennessee State University; Director of First National Bank of Smyrna; Treasurer of Lake Farm Estate; Vice-Chairman of the Smyrna-Rutherford County Airport Authority; and a Member of the Executive Committee of Baptist Hospital in Nashville and the Tennessee Motor Vehicle Commission; and

WHEREAS, Sam Ridley also employed his astute economic sense as a businessman, formerly owning a Chevrolet dealership in Smyrna and partnering in the land development and other business enterprises of Ridley-Coleman-Ridley; his excellence was obvious in this field as well, as he received *Time* magazine's Quality Dealer Award for the Southeastern United States in 1972; and

WHEREAS, a devout Christian, Mr. Ridley was an active member of the First Baptist Church of Smyrna, which he served as a Sunday School teacher, Chairman of Deacons, and Chairman of the Building Committee; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of John Sam Ridley, Sr., longtime and legendary Mayor of Smyrna, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character, his unmatched vision, his unsurpassed service to his community, state, and country, and his commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Ridley.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.